



FIGURE 9-1b
Proposed Trail System
on Carmel Mountain Preserve
(Map 2)

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|--|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|---|
| | Proposed Multi-Use Trails | | Proposed Viewpoint | | SDG&E Access Road |
| | Proposed Hike and Bike Trails | | Proposed Trail Access | | Proposed Fencing |
| | Proposed Hiking and Equestrian Trails | | Proposed Hiking Signage | | Vernal Pools (Source: City of San Diego revised in part by RECON 2001/2002) |
| | Proposed Hiking Only Trails | | Proposed Biking Signage | | Seeps (Source: City of San Diego, Helix Environmental Inc. revised in part by RECON 2002) |
| | Proposed Equestrian Only Trails | | Proposed Signage | | Private Property |

Note: Public trails will not be located on private land (pending land acquisition, MOU and/or trail easement)

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9.3 Nature Trails

A network of utility access roads and authorized and unauthorized paths exists within and adjacent to both the Carmel Mountain and Del Mar Mesa Preserves. Under this management plan, a multi-use trail system will be established for both Preserves to 1) accommodate a variety of recreational uses, 2) provide connections to the local and regional trail system, and 3) offer a unique natural recreation experience while protecting sensitive biological areas. The proposed Carmel Mountain/Del Mar Mesa trail plan would satisfy this area of the City-Wide Trails Master Plan.

The proposed trail system is based on existing paths and use patterns. However, many of the existing, unauthorized paths are located within sensitive habitat areas that have the potential of being adversely impacted by all recreational users. All existing, unauthorized trails will be targeted for active or passive restoration, as appropriate; please see Figure 3-11 for locations of proposed restoration areas. The identified trail system will connect to other open space areas and parks via existing roads and paths, new trails and surface streets. This Plan proposes no impacts associated with trail use (e.g. grading or cutting); any future impacts require additional review and separate permitting.

The trail plan proposes specific enforcement of the adopted trails plan within Del Mar Mesa. A significant portion of the existing paths are within biologically sensitive areas, or have been determined to be redundant, unsustainable and/or unsafe. The goal of the enforcement of the approved trail system is a reduction of human activity in critical natural resource areas (e.g. deer day-bed sites).

Trails proposed on lands not owned by the City of San Diego (e.g. private, CDFG, USFWS) will not be opened for access until the land is conserved or written permission is obtained from the landowner(s). Trails on USFWS lands will require review a Compatibility Determination as part of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan approval; if approved, they would be designated as part of this process. Trails on CDFG lands would also require official review and approval by the Department prior to being authorized for public use.

9.3.1 Carmel Mountain Preserve

9.3.1.1 Existing Conditions and Access

A network of paths and utility access easement roads exists throughout the footprint of Carmel Mountain Preserve. These areas have a long and varied history of uses, including authorized and unauthorized motor vehicle access and multi-use recreation. The paths and roads are highly variable in width, from a few feet up to fifteen feet, and often vary within a single reach.

The paths tend to widen into larger open areas where users cut corners at intersections. Many of these intersections are bare ground, non-native grasses or carpets of *Selaginella* growth, with

few or no shrubs. At some intersections, shortcuts have impacted surrounding shrub vegetation, as well. In many locations vernal pool depressions are found alongside and within the roadway. Roadside vernal pools have been previously impacted by utility maintenance and recreational use in several locations. Vehicles have made deep depressions and road ruts during the wet season and these depressions and ruts remain during the dry part of the year. These areas are now fenced as appropriate to minimize impacts.

SDG&E employees and private landowners may access the Preserve from three existing roads—two from the south and one from the northwest—through locked gates. A key to the appropriate gate will be provided to private property owners. The majority of the roads are maintained by SDG&E for access to their transmission line towers.

As stated in the Carmel Valley Neighborhood 8A Specific Plan/Precise Plan and the City of San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan, trails are a conditionally compatible use in MHPA open space when developed and operated in a manner consistent with the applicable management directives. For example, authorized trails should follow existing dirt paths and roads as much as possible, should not bisect sensitive habitat, and must be directed away from sensitive areas through signage and/or fencing, where necessary. If trails are provided through MHPA open space, the following directives shall apply.

- 1) Provide sufficient signage to clearly identify public access to the MHPA.
- 2) Locate trails, view overlooks and staging areas in public owned areas and in the least sensitive areas of the MHPA. Locate trails along the edges of urban development and follow existing dirt roads/trails and utility easements as much as possible.
- 3) Trails should not be paved, and trail widths should be minimized.

In addition, the MSCP General Management Directives (City of San Diego Subarea Plan Section 1.5.2) for trail design and maintenance are applicable.

9.3.1.2 Trail, Access Point, and View Point Plan

The proposed trail system for Carmel Mountain Preserve makes use of some of the existing roads and narrow paths to accommodate compatible recreational use, creating reasonable trail loops and connectivity to adjacent trail systems; please refer to Figure 9-1b for details of the trail plan.

Authorized trails within the Carmel Mountain Preserve were planned and are maintained consistent with the MSCP and the Carmel Valley Neighborhood 8A Specific Plan/Precise Plan. For example, fencing and signage have been used to direct human access away from vernal pools and state-endangered short-leaved dudleya populations. In addition to protective fencing and interpretive signage, regular patrols by volunteers and staff also limit human impacts, educate users and monitor sensitive habitat. In some cases, trail use is restricted to specific

user types, such as equestrians or cyclists, based on trail configuration (e.g. historic use and/or connectivity), user group input and/or sensitive natural resources. Authorized trails on Carmel Mountain are located within existing road beds or established use patterns. Trails are maintained at minimal widths where possible, and closed areas previously impacted by roads or paths are protected to allow passive restoration. The designated trail system for all use types avoids wetlands, including vernal pools; therefore this trail system fulfills the MSCP requirement to develop an equestrian use plan.

Proposed trails on Carmel Mountain are within existing use patterns and were selected to avoid identified vernal pools, and sensitive natural resources and habitat. Additionally, trail selection was based on one or more of the following trail criteria: 1) Connectivity, 2) Destination or 3) Loop trails. Trail-use designation was based on historical use, and community input (including representatives of all user groups). Trails not considered for inclusion were based on:

- Redundant trails
- Unauthorized trails, including shortcuts
- Trails not accessible to the public
- Unsafe or unsustainable trails

Proposed trail selection was reviewed for consistency to MSCP requirements and directives, and with direction from MSCP staff on fencing and signage to direct use away from or close sensitive areas.

Vehicle access points and trail heads are provided at strategic locations for reasonable access. Vehicle access is provided at three existing locations: 1) the southwest access is located at the corner of Shorepointe Way and Longshore Way; 2) the central access is located at the corner of Fairport Way and Shorepointe Way west of Ocean Air Community Park; and 3) the northwest access point is located within the Pinnacle at Carmel Creek apartment complex at the end of Carmel Creek Road. Additional trail heads are located on the north of the Preserve, along the Carmel Valley Riparian Enhancement Project (CVREP) Trail for equestrian users, and on the southeast edge of the Preserve, east of Ocean Air Elementary School for pedestrian and equestrian users.

There are three scenic viewpoints proposed on Carmel Mountain Preserve. One is located at the northeast corner of the mesa overlooking Shaw Valley and Black Mountain Open Space Park. Two view points are proposed on the western edge of the Preserve where the land slopes downward toward a panoramic view of Torrey Pines State Park, Del Mar and the Pacific Ocean.

Several paths on the eastern side of the Preserve will be closed to protect a large population of state endangered short-leaved dudleya and several vernal pools. Additional paths will be closed throughout the Preserve to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of native ecosystem function and natural processes and to protect the existing and restored biological resources from disturbance. Permanent closure and re-vegetation of paths shown may be

approved by Mayoral action, and will be supported with substantive documentation for closure including but not limited to:

- Unsafe or unsustainable trails
- Trails initiating opportunities for illegal activity
- Trails contributing to resource impacts (i.e. erosion, sensitive biological areas, etc.)
- New environmental concerns

Proposed changes or additions to the trail alignments included in this document will be evaluated based on the MSCP and additional applicable regulations, if any, and the acquisition of appropriate permits. All changes must be authorized through an amendment to this plan or through concurrence of City, CDFG and USFWS staff.

9.3.2 Del Mar Mesa Preserve

9.3.2.1 Existing Conditions and Access

In addition to authorized utility access roads, a large network of unauthorized paths exist throughout the Del Mar Mesa Preserve (Figure 3-11) on both public and private lands. This network has a long and varied history of uses including authorized and unauthorized motor vehicle access, illegal encampments and multi-use recreation, with paths/roads that vary in width from a few feet up to thirty feet. A major component of this network is referred to as the “tunnels”, a connective system of over 10 miles of narrow unauthorized paths, many of which are under the canopy of chaparral vegetation.

The main utility access road runs north/south through the center of the Preserve with spurs to SDG&E transmission towers. An unauthorized road bisects the CDFG Vernal Pool Reserve and ends at the southeast corner of the Preserve. Many of the existing roads and paths bisect vernal pool habitat (see Figures 9-3a and 9-3b). Ninety-three vernal pools and depressions were mapped within the SDG&E access roads and the unauthorized east-west road on the CDFG Vernal Pool Preserve. Roadside vernal pools have been previously impacted by utility maintenance and recreational use in several locations; however, impacts associated with SDGE activities within the SDGE right-of-way are covered by the SDGE NCCP. Vehicles have made deep depressions and road ruts during the wet season (Photograph 9-1) and these depressions and ruts remain during the dry part of the year (see Appendix A6).